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VI. — *An Interpretation of Ranae, 788-790*

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μὰ Δι' οὐκ ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλ' ἔκυσε μὲν Αἰσχύλον,  
 ὅτε δὴ κατῆλθε, κἀνέβαλε τὴν δεξιάν,  
 κἀκεῖνος ὑπεχώρησεν αὐτῷ τοῦ θρόνου.

IN few passages of Aristophanes have commentators and critics raised more questions relative to interpretation, or given answers more widely diverse than in these opening lines in the account of the conduct of Sophocles on his arrival in the underworld. Who gave the kiss? Who is ἐκεῖνος in 790? What is the import of ὑπεχώρησεν? Is 790 spurious? If genuine, to whom is it to be assigned in the dialogue? These have been mooted questions,<sup>1</sup> some of them for centuries.

<sup>1</sup> For convenience, a brief summary of the debate in its chronological order is subjoined:—

Callistratus, quoted by a scholiast: οὐχ ὡς παραδεδωκός Αἰσχύλου τὸν θρόνον τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ, ἀλλ' ὡς παραδεδεγμένου αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποκεχωρηκός.

Frischlinus: Aesch. Sophocli primam sedem cessit.

Kusterus: Cave haec cum Frischl. ita capias. Soph. Aeschylo hunc honorem exhibuit, ut ex antecedentibus et sequentibus patet.

Dobree: Versum (790) esse delendum paene suspicor. Tolerabilior esset, si Xanthiae daretur cum nota interrogationis in fine.

Bothe: A. sedem concessit Sophocli, sed hic non accepit.

Bekker endorses Kusterus.

Cookesley: A. ceded throne to S.

Mitchell: A. yielded state-chair to S. The verse seems very much like an interpolation.

Fritzsche endorses Bothe.

Kock<sup>2</sup>: ἐκεῖνος cannot be A., for (a) that would require ὑπεχώρει, and (b) S. did not accept the offer.

Halm (*Rhein. Mus.* XXIII, 210) endorses Kock; nor can ἐκεῖνος be S., because of (a) the clumsy and—in a poet—inexcusable repetition of ἐκεῖνος, and (b) the absurdity of saying that S. gave up a place he had never taken; hence the verse must be an interpolation due to some one who did not notice that the sense was already complete.

Kock<sup>3</sup> endorses Halm, brackets line.

A study of the passage has led me to the view that the text is all that can be desired, and that the commentators have missed the essential point in its interpretation. They seem to consider the kiss and the handshaking merely as a greeting. If this were true, Naber's position would seem by far the most tenable, as at least a score of instances in the ancient literature of Greece can be cited to support it. I have found none to support Kock's assertion that the reverse of the custom is found "sehr oft." Neither of the passages cited by Kock is at all apposite, for neither describes such a salutation.<sup>1</sup>

Much more than greeting seems to be involved in our passage. The phrase *ἐνέβαλεν τῇν δεξιάν* does not seem to be a classical expression for the hand clasp of an ordinary or formal salutation. In the Greek writers, it seems always to

Langueville (Didot's ed.): Atque ille (A.) sponte ei (S.) cessisset solium.

Velsen: Hunc versum (790) Xanthiae dedi.

Blaydes: text as Velsen; critical note proposes *ὑπεχώρησ' ἄν*. "cessisset, nempe, si voluisset Sophocles" and adds, "Spurius fortasse versus est."

Naber (*Mnemosyne*, XI, 35): *κακείνος* is Sophocles, but emend to *Αισχύλος* in 788. Advenam osculamur ut intelligat se amari et iucundum hospitem adesse, sed si advena anteverterit et osculum occupaverit praesentiam suam obtrudere videbitur et odium pariet. Iidem mores *ἐν Αἰδου* obtinent.

Morris, C. D. (*A/P*, v, 260): Naber's emendation is "very happy" and "removes all the difficulty."

Van Leeuwen (*Mnemosyne*, XXIV, 113): Text is "quam maxime perspicua." Follow Callistratus; A. shares the seat with S. [Makes a curious blunder in saying of Dobree, "a Bothio Fritzschioque in errorem adductus," as B.'s first edition appeared five years later than the *Aristophanica* and F. was only a lad in 1820. Dobree had been dead a score of years when F.'s *Ranae* appeared.]

Blass (*Hermes*, XXXII, 150 f.): *κακείνος* can be neither A. nor S. A question would require an answer. Callistratus "sehr gut im Sinne: nur kann dies in *ὑποχωρεῖν* nicht liegen. Vielleicht *ἐπεχώρησεν* mit partitivem Genetiv. Ginge auch das nicht, so bliebe nur die ultima ratio den V. zu tilgen."

Kock<sup>4</sup> (*Anhang*): Refutes statements that *κακείνος* is A., that verse is a question of Xanthias, and that A. shares seat with S. Simplest solution is to delete verse, but this has its difficulties. Weak in reply to Naber. In closing, he desiderates for *κακείνος* some adjective meaning "freudig, bereitwillig, ruhig," but *κεῖκλος* (or *χακκλος*) is not found in Aristophanes.

<sup>1</sup> In the one instance, *Il.* XXIV, 478, the kiss is a part of the humiliating supplication of Priam; in the other, Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1131, it is a spontaneous expression of deepest gratitude to Theseus for the deliverance of Antigone and Ismene.

import the idea of a pledge or assurance of something not implied in the usual greeting.

We may illustrate by the following passages:<sup>1</sup>

Soph. *Trach.* 1181 : ἔμβαλλε χεῖρα δεξιὰν πρώτιστά μοι.

Heracles asks a pledge that his son will carry out his last commands. In the next verse Hyllus refers to this as πίστιν τήνδε.

Id. *Phil.* 813 : ἔμβαλλε χειρὸς πίστιν.

Philoctetes requires the assurance of the right hand of Neoptolemus.

Arist. *Ran.* 754-755 :

ἔμβαλέ μοι τὴν δεξιάν,  
καὶ δὸς κύσαι καὶ τὸς κύσον.

This is no greeting, but a sudden pledge of friendship and fellowship based upon a newly discovered "uniformity of feeling and sentiment upon the topics most familiar to them as slaves" (Frere, ad loc.).

Id. *Vesp.* 554 : ἐμβάλλει μοι τὴν χεῖρ' ἀπαλήν.

Along with the solicitation of the dicast there is an implied assurance of some *quid pro quo* for any favor he may show.

Diphilus, *Zogr.* (Kock, II, 554, 24) : τὴν δεξιὰν ἐνέβαλον, ἐμνήσθην Διὸς σωτήρος.

Here is congratulation with a feigned assurance of gratitude for the preservation and good fortune of a solicited patron.

Demos. 553 : τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβαλὼν.

Id. 554 : τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβεβληκότα.

Aeschin. 224 : τὴν δεξιὰν ἐνέβαλες.

These all refer to pledges.

Diog. Laert. VIII, 1, 17 : μὴ ῥαδίως δεξιὰν ἐμβάλλειν.

Plut. II, 12 E : μὴ παντὶ ἐμβάλλειν δεξιάν.

Ib. 96 A : μὴ πολλοῖς ἐμβάλλειν δεξιάν.

<sup>1</sup> These are all that have been found in a search covering Homer, the Tragic and Comic Poets, including fragments, Pindar, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, the Attic Orators, Plutarch, and a large portion of Lucian.

These are three variants of a *γνώμη* ascribed to Pythagoras. Plutarch interprets it in the first instance as *προχειρώς οὐ δεῖ συναλλάσσειν* and in the second as *μὴ πολλοὺς ποιεῖσθαι φίλους*. As Pythagoras is the reputed author of the *sententiae*, — *κοινὰ τὰ φίλων εἶναι* and *τὸν δὲ φίλον ἄλλον ἑαυτὸν*, — the latter interpretation is quite as favorable as the former.

The phrase *τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβάλλειν* is found also in the following passages of Plutarch: I, 478 A; Sulla avoids what might have been interpreted as a pledge, or assurance. I, 550 E; Crassus takes the initiative in a pledge of reconciliation with Pompey. I, 587 D; Eumenes assures the dying Craterus of his good will and his regret that he has had to engage in battle with an old friend with such evil consequences. I, 765 C; Cato has suffered humiliation at Antioch. Pompey shames the people by his unusual marks of respect. He does not receive him sitting, but rises, goes to meet him, and as to a more honorable person gives him his hand and embraces him. This instance seems most nearly of all to approach the formal salutation, but the context shows that it was more, a visible token and assurance of great respect. I, 907 D; Erasistratus assures Seleucus of his deep sympathy in a trying situation. I, 1036 A; Technon proffers assurance to one whom he supposes cognizant of his master's secret. I, 1056 C; Aratus gives Philip an assurance of the restoration of good feeling. II, 597 F; the dying Cephisodorus gives Pelopidas an earnest of his friendship and his gratitude for vengeance upon Leontidas.

Finally, Suidas defines *δεξιὰν ἐνέβαλεν αὐτῷ* as *σύνταξις*. Every passage cited above supports in some measure this definition.

As in *Ran.* 755 the kiss was also a part of the pledge, so it is also in *Nub.* 81 — *κύσον με καὶ τὴν χεῖρα δὸς τὴν δεξιάν*, where the meaning is "Give me this pledge of your filial affection as an assurance that you will grant the request I am about to make of you." Pheidippides so understands it, as is shown by his reply: *ἰδοὺ· τί ἔστιν*;

In our passage, then, we see in the kiss an earnest of reconciliation and peace after the rivalries of life. As in

the two instances last cited it is a concomitant of the pledge given by the hand. The clasp of the hand is a further assurance of this feeling and a pledge, implied but instinctively understood from its very heartiness, that he had no intention of disturbing him in his occupancy of the seat of "privilege and precedence." After his experience with the newly arrived Euripides, this must naturally have been almost the first thought to occur to Aeschylus on seeing the arrival of Sophocles also. He had never met the former in a tragic contest, but on the very first appearance of the latter he had sustained a stinging and mortifying defeat, if tradition is true. The former had not yet proved a popular favorite on earth, and had but five first prizes to his credit; but the latter had long been a popular idol, who had never taken less than the second place and had a long list of twenty first prizes. We can imagine, then, that Aeschylus now had considerable uneasiness and apprehension. The kindly, genial nature of Sophocles prompts him at once to make such overtures as would most speedily and effectively allay this feeling. This harmonizes with all that the ancients have told us of the temperaments and dispositions of the two men, is in thorough accord with the entire context of the play, and calls for no change in the received text. In its sequel it is further true to human nature in that the magnanimous course pursued by Sophocles wins the heart of the grim old master and establishes cordial relations between them.

With this interpretation there is no difficulty in the much mooted verse 790. Ἐκεῖνος is, of course, Sophocles. It is an emphatic repetition of the ἐκεῖνος of 788 for the sake of what is now, in the interpretation given, the strongest possible contrast with Euripides and his attitude on his arrival in the realm of Pluto. In reply to Halm's objection that it is a clumsy and, in a poet, inexcusable repetition of the pronoun, we may compare it with the κεῖνος in Soph. *Ajax* 275, emphatically repeating the ἐκεῖνος of 271. In this parallel the antithetical ἡμεῖς is, it is true, expressed, but for all that, the emphasis is no whit more pronounced than in the *Ranae*, where the thought of Euripides is most vividly present.

Halm's subjective criticism does not conform to the aesthetic freedom of either Sophocles or Aristophanes.

Nor is either the meaning or the tense of ὑπεχώρησεν at all troublesome. No forced interpretation of either is required. Both are entirely normal. By laying no claim to the master's seat of honor, Sophocles as effectually performs all that the word expresses or implies, as if he had first made a contest, established his right to the seat, taken possession of it, and then withdrawn and yielded it to Aeschylus. If one of two that are selected as alone eligible for an honor or a prize and that have nearly or quite equal chances of winning it, voluntarily withdraws from the contest, surely he may be said by that very act to yield the honor to the other. The verb ὑποχωρεῖν is used repeatedly in the contemporary Thucydides to express the act of withdrawing from the presence of a superior force or that of a force with which no contest is at the time desired. The military metaphor, also, may serve our purpose here.

In a great majority of the instances cited in the foregoing of the phrase τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβάλλειν, it is the one coming who makes the proffer of the hand in the pledge. So Naber's objection cannot be transferred from the salutation to the hand clasp of an assurance or pledge. Thus every objection of any weight at all that has been brought against the text of the passage seems to vanish before the interpretation herein proposed, and every question has its definitive answer.